

## INTRODUCTION

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### **What this book aims to do**

Whether you are a literacy educator, a student teacher, a school adviser/inspector, a teacher educator, a literacy researcher, or just interested in the reading process, this book invites you to develop your own perspective on reading. It seeks to help you acquire a deeper understanding of the reading process and especially the theoretical underpinnings of different approaches to fostering reading in the classroom. Written primarily for teachers, teacher educators, and student teachers, it aims to help you not only with the selection of teaching strategies for the development of reading but also with an understanding of the theoretical rationale for particular approaches. The book will bring together issues of practice, pedagogy and theory in such a way as to encourage you to apply your understanding to your own personal context and to consider your own and others' practices, policies and theories with more discernment and insight.

It aims to support you in understanding the variety of possible teacher responses to classroom evidence about readers. It is intended to help people move away from a simplistic 'either-or' position with regard to reading practice and theory, to one that acknowledges that theories, teaching, and policies are not so conveniently labelled or pigeon-holed. It seeks to do this by moving from practice to theory rather than the other way round. It has two key features: first, the sense of being 'at the chalk face' – beginning with the reality of the concrete situation of a particular classroom, child and

teacher, and second, the attempt to reveal assumptions, to define terms and to resist attempts to polarize and pigeon-hole.

Evidence that literacy educators and researchers hold different perspectives on reading can be found in debates about what counts as literacy and how to develop it. In 1995 the *Journal of Research in Reading*, for example, devoted an entire volume to a consideration of definitions of literacy, while how best to teach literacy has been a focus of debate for decades (e.g. Chall 1992; Goodman 1992; Oakhill and Beard 1999). An important underlying assumption of this book is that there is no 'one' right approach, philosophy or method of developing reading that is likely to be accepted by everyone and my intention is not to chase after some elusive right answer. Rather my intention is to promote understanding of multiple perspectives on reading and its development.

### Origin of the book

Professionally, I, along with many others, have found the critical incident or the case or the story a very powerful means of teaching and learning especially in situations, like teaching, where the ultimate aim is professional action. Hence the initial focus on one child as a reader. The specific attention to multiple perspectives on reading stems from several experiences. In 1995, when working at Canterbury Christ Church University College, I was charged with the task of preparing a document on reading for an Ofsted inspection. This document had to represent the large and diverse lecturer team's pedagogical philosophy on reading and also needed to be in line with narrower, politically-driven agendas at the time about reading. The difficulty, not to say impossibility, of this task brought home to me the complexity of the theoretical underpinnings of reading practice and policy and how we so frequently underestimate the scale of this complexity in teaching, in policy making and in research. I resolved at that time to write something that would support teachers, teacher educators, and student teachers in recognizing the theoretical nuances of reading practice and policy. More recently, I participated in a conference in the United States where a variation of the approach I am using here was the basis of a seminar convened by Yetta Goodman (1998). In my view this was extremely effective in terms of making the abstract concrete, which is essentially what I am trying to do here. The experience, even more recently, of convening a symposium for the United Kingdom Reading Association's Annual Conference in Oxford in July 2000 in which I used a similar approach prompted me, finally, to write this book. Indeed the response I obtained from the people I approached to participate in the UKRA symposium (some of whom also participated in this project), as well as the audience participants, suggested that this was a valuable way to proceed.

### Database and approach

The book begins with the practical, authentic context of one child – Stephen – in one classroom in a regular primary school in England in the first year of the twenty-first century. On getting permission from all the relevant partners (i.e. Stephen himself, his mother, his teacher and the headteacher of the school) I video-recorded Stephen reading and retelling *Bear by Mick Inkpen* to his teacher. I then transcribed the entire recording in full and conducted an analysis of the muscues or the errors that Stephen made. This database along with some biographical information about Stephen then became the vehicle through which I planned to probe different perspectives on teaching strategies and theoretical understandings of the reading process. I approached eight well-known and distinguished literacy educators and asked them to participate in the project. Participation involved viewing the recording, reading the transcript and being interviewed. I asked all eight scholars the same four, key questions:

- 1 What do we know about Stephen as a reader?
- 2 What else would you like to know about him?
- 3 What should his teacher do to enhance his reading?
- 4 What theoretical perspectives underpin your suggestions?

I audio-recorded and later transcribed the interviews with all the scholars and returned the transcripts to them so they could amend, confirm or extend their responses in any way they wished. All the scholars selected for the project have written extensively on literacy, all have key positions in teacher education and/or have a national profile in terms of influencing official policy and practice in schools. All have a background as class teachers. The scholars were selected on the likelihood that across the group, a variety of emphases on reading, reflected in a diversity of suggested ways of fostering reading in the classroom, would emerge. I also expected to find a good deal of consensus across these scholars' thinking. I was not disappointed on either count.

On the basis of the interviews I was able to par those scholars who were alike in some key respects in their responses to the questions. This paired arrangement provided me with a launching pad from which I could describe and analyse, in more detail, four major theoretical perspectives on reading. This means the book is divided into four major parts, each part consisting of a brief introduction, edited transcripts from two reading scholars, and a discussion of fundamental issues raised through these transcripts.

### Why oral reading?

Reading aloud remains part and parcel of everyday classroom reading practice. It is used by the teacher as a way of monitoring a child's progress and

development as a reader. It is also used as a way of developing successful reading strategies, of raising awareness of and introducing new strategies. Classroom teachers and reading specialists use oral reading to make pedagogical decisions about pupils. Similarly, researchers often use oral reading to gain insights into reading development or the reading process itself. However, teachers, reading specialists and researchers differ on the importance they attribute to factors like accuracy, fluency, word recognition, phonemic awareness, phonics, the socio-cultural context of reading, and so on (Goodman 1998). How a reader is heard depends on how such factors are conceptualized by the listener.

There are deliberate omissions in relation to the wider area of reading. I was aware that the evidence presented about Stephen to our scholars could have been different and different questions could have been asked of the interviewees. It was my expectation that some of the scholars would challenge the evidence that was collected and this is part of the book's particular interest – in inviting different perspectives on the reading process, it invites different interpretations on what counts as valuable evidence of reading achievement.

### Pen portrait of Stephen and his learning context

We start here with a pen portrait of Stephen and then describe the teaching approach his teacher used with him and the class in general.

Stephen is 8 years old and in Year 3 in a big school, located in a working-class area of a large city in England. He is the elder of two children. He is described by his teacher as much loved by caring parents and as a child who is quiet and reserved in manner but who is not withdrawn. He loves the school breaks and gets on well with the other children in the class. He has two or three special friends with whom he spends much of the break time. His mother is a friendly and supportive person who frequently visits the school and who participates in school events. Stephen is eager to please his teacher; he agreed readily to allow me to record him reading to his teacher – we also recorded five other children most of whom were from the same class and reading ability level and who, incidentally, revelled in the opportunity to be on video. Just before the recording Stephen talked to me and to his teacher about what he was doing in class that morning, he smiled a little and seemed rather shy. He had a cold that day. His teacher told me afterwards that he said he was worried about reading as he was afraid he wouldn't *know the words*. He was keen to leave when the recording was over as the bell had gone for break and he wished to get out and play.

Stephen's Year 3 class of 28 children has a considerable ability spread, having two children who have a statement of special educational need and several who reached Level 3 in the standard assessment tasks at the end of

their previous year in school (Year 2). Most of the class had obtained Level 2 in reading and writing. Stephen himself had obtained a Level 1 in both reading and in writing in the national, externally set assessment tasks. Level one in reading is described as follows:

Pupils recognise familiar words in simple text. They use their knowledge of letters and sound-symbol relationships in order to read words and to establish meaning when reading aloud. In these activities they sometimes require support. They express their response to poems, stories and non-fiction by identifying aspects they like.

The typical pupil is expected, at the end of Year 2, to achieve at Level 2 in those assessments. Stephen's teacher believes that in May of Year 3 he could just about be described as working at the next level which is described as follows:

Pupils' reading of simple texts shows understanding and is generally accurate. They express opinions about major events or ideas in stories, poems and non-fiction. They use more than one strategy, such as phonic, graphic, syntactic and contextual, in reading unfamiliar words and establishing meaning.

Over his period in Year 3 Stephen has struggled with literacy tasks in general and with reading in particular.

Although he finds reading a challenge Stephen is not so weak a learner or a reader as to meet the criteria for having a statement of special educational need, in which case his teacher could draw on specialist support and resources to help him. He is not untypical, therefore, of a sizeable minority of children in most classrooms in primary schools. Primary teachers will readily identify with the demands placed on Stephen's teacher in providing the necessary support for him in the context of a relatively large and mixed-ability class. So the key reason for selecting him as a basis for this book is that his and his teacher's situation typifies very many situations in mainstream classes up and down the country.

His teacher uses a variety of approaches to teach reading in her classroom. She uses a mix of approaches: she develops her pupils' word attack skills through an emphasis on phonics and context cues and she uses word games and work books with all the class, but especially with those who are finding reading difficult. She uses graded, commercially produced reading schemes as well as real books. Children have opportunities to read to their teacher individually on a regular basis, i.e. several times per week, and this is especially the case for the weaker readers. These children listen to tape recordings of books and are encouraged to read the book as they listen to the tape. Time is also spent on choosing books and on silent reading. Reading and writing are integrated and one is seen as enhancing the other. In the light of the National Literacy Strategy, which teachers are increasingly

encouraged to adhere to, the teacher this year is placing much more emphasis on whole class teaching, on text-based work and on word-based activity in line with the requirements of the National Strategy.

Before presenting the text that Stephen read and the miscue analysis and retelling, some background information on miscue analysis is important.

### Miscue analysis

Developed by Kenneth and Yetta Goodman in the US over thirty years ago, miscue analysis is a technique that provides insights into a child's oral reading approach. It provides a descriptive, qualitative account of a child's reading strategies. It is based on the idea that the errors or miscues that children make while reading aloud provide valuable information about the way they use various reading strategies to work out what the print says. The miscues are what the child says when something other than the words in the text are offered (Goodman 1973). The thinking is that if we can relate the miscues to what should have been read we can begin to understand the extent to which that child is an effective reader. That means we can work out the extent to which s/he is able to use the following cues:

- orthographic (print cues or the look of the letters and word on the page);
- phonic (print cues or knowledge of the sound of the letters/words);
- semantic (meaning cues or using knowledge and experience of stories and of written texts to predict events); and
- syntactic (grammar or the ability to draw on knowledge and experience of patterns in oral and written language to predict text).

Goodman also suggests that better readers make use of both the linguistic contextual information (syntactic and semantic cues) and orthographic and phonic cues (sometimes combined and referred to as graphophonic cues), whereas poor readers tend to make use of graphophonic information only. But, as will be discussed later, this is a controversial point.

It is important to note that miscue analysis is based on a particular perspective on reading – often described as psycho-linguistic. This perspective interprets reading as an interaction between language and thought to construct meaning from text. It sees the reader as a chaser-after-meaning, as someone who is actively engaged in meaning making. It sees the reader as processing the text using successful strategies and/or those which may be unsuitable to the understanding of what is on the page.

In developing miscue analysis the Goodmans were establishing new ways of thinking about reading, ways that were seeking to move beyond what we often describe as barking at print. Miscue analysis was one way that

helped to develop new theoretical approaches to reading and the teaching of reading, and shifted the focus from word calling to reading comprehension. It created a new way of viewing the errors a reader makes: it moved away from the correct-incorrect paradigm. This approach was revolutionary as it viewed the miscues the reader made as instances of reading, rather than instances of mistakes or errors, and so they became valid evidence of the reading process that merited scrutiny (Bloome and Dail 1997). Just as the expected or accurate responses the reader made were viewed as instances of meaning making, so the unexpected or inaccurate responses were viewed as the product of the same meaning-making orientation.

More recently, Goodman *et al.* (1987) and others (Black and Paulson 2000) have extended the use of miscue analysis in a way that more directly involves the reader in reflecting on the miscues made by asking the reader to comment on them. This is called retrospective miscue analysis and it provides yet further insights into how a child is reading. Miscue analysis is not without its critics (Bloome and Dail 1997), but more of that later.

Over the years since the Goodmans developed the technique of miscue analysis, others have modified it and adapted it (Arnold 1982; Moon 1990). The form used with Stephen is a further adaptation. Based on the same reading perspective as miscue analysis, the running record is similar to miscue analysis – it is also an observational, diagnostic technique. Devised by Marie Clay (1985), the running record refers to three main reading strategies – 'meaning', 'structure' and 'visual'. 'Meaning' corresponds to semantic cues above. Clay asks, 'Does the child use meaning?' 'Structure' corresponds to syntactic cues above – it is about grammar. The teacher is asked to consider the question: 'Is what the child says grammatical?' 'Visual' corresponds with orthographic cues above – the question is, 'Does the child use visual cues from the letters and words?' Clay also refers to phonic cues and self-correction.

Several books offer guidance on how to conduct a miscue analysis and/or a running record (Wixson 1979; Arnold 1982; Clay 1985; Batts *et al.* 1988; Moon 1990; Campbell 1993). The book *Reading Miscue Inventory* by Goodman *et al.* (1987) describes the original version and is worth consulting while Robin Campbell's *Miscue Analysis in the Classroom* (1993) describes not just how to conduct it in the classroom but also describes and discusses more recent versions of it like the running record and retrospective miscue analysis.

There are four main steps in carrying out a miscue analysis (assuming you are not going to video- or audio-record the proceedings):

- 1 Select a text of about 200 words on which to base the analysis. Make a copy for yourself to record the miscues as the child reads.
- 2 Before the child starts to read, discuss the purpose and method with the child so she understands you are both working together to improve her reading.

## 8 Listening to Stephen read

- 3 After the child reads the story ask her to retell it in her own words, asking some open-ended questions to probe understanding and comprehension of the text.
- 4 There are several ways of coding the miscues. The coding for Stephen's miscues is given on the text below.

### Stephen's reading, retelling and miscues

Included here is a full transcript of Stephen's reading, retelling and miscues. The text on which the miscue is based is presented in Appendix 1 without any annotation of miscues. It is presented here with the miscues indicated and the retelling included.

NAME: Stephen

CLASS/AGE: Year 3/8 years

DATE: 11 May 2000

### CODING

Substitution: line through the word and substitution written in.

Self-correction: line through the word and all attempts/correction written in.

Omission: circle round the word omitted. 'T' over the word when told by the teacher.

Insertion: word written in.

Hesitation or Pause: indicated by the line numbers based in turn on the audio counter.

Repetition: the repeated word is underlined.

What the teacher said or did is indicated in brackets.

Bear by Mick Inkpen

Stephen selects this book from a choice of six spread out on the table. He turns all the pages in the book before he decides that this is the one he would like to read. Jackie, his teacher, asks how they should proceed – whether she should read first, then for him to join in or for him to start on his own. He decides Jackie should start reading first.

Jackie points out the author's name and the list of all the books he has written which are listed inside the first page.

They agree that Jackie will start reading by herself, then Stephen will read with her and then he will read on his own.

## Introduction 9

Jackie starts reading:

A small whoosing sound.

Then a plopl!

A bounce.

And a kind of squeak.

That was how the bear landed in my baby sister's playpen.

Have you ever had a bear fall out of the sky, right in front of you?

At first I thought he was a teddy bear. He just lay there, crumpled on the quilt.

Then he got up and took Sophie's drink. And her biscuit. That's when I knew he was real.

The bear climbed out of the playpen and looked at me.

He rolled on his back, lifted his paws and growled.

He seemed to want to play.

I put him in Sophie's baby bouncer.

He was very good at bouncing, much better than Sophie.

Do you want to join in?

They read together:

I sneaked the bear into the house under the quilt. At bedtime I hid him among my toys. 'Don't you say anything Sophie!' I said. 'I want to keep this bear.' Sophie doesn't say much anyway. She isn't even two yet.

Stephen now reads on his own:

01 In the morning the

02 sound of

03 shouting

04 woke me up. (Good boy)

05 'Sophie, that's

06 naughty!' It was mummy.

07 She the

08 was a

09 looking at me

10 fathers. (Following the teacher's pointing to the picture of fathers)

11 'Sophie!

12 That's very naughty!'

13 She was looking

- 14 at the  
15 .....  
16 .....  
17 .....  
18 .....  
19
- 20 <sup>T</sup>scribble (What sound does it start with?) 1. sc  
21 Then  
22 <sup>T</sup>she she looked at the  
23  
24  
25 potty. (Teacher points to the picture)  
26 'Sophie!'  
27 she said.  
28 'Good girl!'  
29 But I don't  
30  
31  
32  
33 <sup>T</sup>think 1. the (Teacher says 'But I don't...') 2. think  
34 it was Sophie. (Good boy)  
35 I'm <sup>T</sup>sure it  
36 wasn't Sophie.  
37  
38 It  
39  
40  
41 definitely 1. dee-f (try) 2. dee fee (def-in-e) 3. definitely (definitely)  
42 wasn't Sophie.  
43  
44 I took the bear to  
45 school in my  
46  
47
- 48 <sup>T</sup>sack (Try the first bit) 1. rr  
49  
50 <sup>T</sup>sack

- 51 <sup>T</sup>Everyone  
52 wanted  
53 to be my  
54 friend.  
55 <sup>T</sup>Does he 1. Did  
56 bite? 1. ba 2. bite (Good boy)  
57 they said. 1. he 2. I  
58 'He doesn't bite me,' X said.  
59 'What's his name?' they said.  
60 'He doesn't have one.'  
61  
62 We  
63 <sup>T</sup>kept 1. Keep (Good try)  
64 him  
65 <sup>T</sup>quiet all  
66 day  
67 feed-ing feeding him our  
68 lunches. (Our lunches)  
69 He liked  
70 the peanut butter  
71  
72 sand  
73 wiches best. (Sandwiches)
- Retelling 075-103  
J: Could you tell me what you've read already? What happened in this story?  
S: Can you tell me what happens in the story? How does it start?  
S: It starts with the teddy bear... goes... up... he goes down... he bounces... then he squeaks... and the little boy (inaudible but sounds like 'that was keeping him')... and it was morning... (not clear) there was a big row (not clear) before dark...  
J: There was a row, what had happened?  
S: Sophie was there too... writing on the wallpaper  
J: Poor Sophie! What else did... happened?  
S: And... before that... she'd gonna be sittin' on the toilet but she didn't go  
J: Who had been doing these things?

- S: The teddy bear.  
 J: *The teddy bear and then what happened after that?*  
 S: Then they went to school . . . and then  
 J: *Who went to school?*  
 S: The little boy  
 J: *The little boy, um*  
 S: and then . . . the other kids . . . they tried to be his friend because he had a teddy bear  
 J: *Yea. And so what did they do then?*  
 S: And then . . . the bear had peanut butter sandwiches and he liked them the best.  
 J: *Right. Do you like peanut butter sandwiches?*  
 S: Shakes his head  
 J: *You don't like them at all. Have you tried them?*  
 S: Yea  
 J: *I like peanut butter sandwiches. You remembered that story so well. You remembered everything. You're doing really really well Stephen. Will we read a bit more?*  
 Stephen now reads on his own:  
 104 *After 1. Af 2. After (Good boy, after)*  
 105 school my friends  
 106 came to  
 107 the house.  
 108 'Where is  
 109 he?  
 110 they said.  
 111 We played with the bear  
 112  
 113  
 114 <sup>T</sup> be  
 115 hind 1. ʔe  
 116 the  
 117 <sup>T</sup> garage 1. ga 2. ga-ra 3. grack  
 (Real good try, garage)  
 118  
 119  
 120  
 121 We made a  
 122  
 123  
 124

- 125 track  
 126 tyrañel . . .  
 127 a byridge . . . 1. bir-a 2. bir-aq 3. a bird  
 (Teacher says *What's going on over here?* as she points to the bridge in the picture) 4. a byridge  
 128  
 129 and a jump!  
 130  
 131 When the car came back  
 132 the bear had gone.  
 133 We looked and looked  
 134 but there was no bear anywhere.  
 135  
 136 At bedtime Sophie  
 137 wouldn't go to sleep.  
 138 She didn't  
 139 want her elephant.  
 140 She didn't want her rabbit.  
 141 She  
 142  
 143 threw 1. the 2. the-u 3. thr-au  
 (Threw, good try)  
 144 them out of the cot.  
 145 I  
 146 <sup>T</sup> gave 1. ga 2. ga (her my)  
 147 her my  
 148 second  
 149 best pig.  
 150 She threw it out.  
 151 'Sophie! That's  
 152 <sup>T</sup> naughty' said mum.  
 153 But Sophie just  
 154  
 155 <sup>T</sup> howled 1. how-led  
 (Sophie just what? Stephen says 'I don't know what that says. Teacher supplies the word. He repeats it).  
 156

- 157                   *wants*  
 158   She wanted the bear.  
 159   CRASH! BANG!  
 160   It was the  
 161  
 162                   *1. mid-del 2. middle*  
 163   SMASH!  
 164   CLASH! 1. cl-ang 2. clang  
 165                   *T*  
 166   The noise 1. no  
 167   was coming from the kitchen.  
 168                   *came*  
 169   We crept downstairs  
 170   and peeped 1. peep-ed 2. peeped  
 171                   *T*  
 172   the door.  
 173                   *I at*  
 174   I wasn't at  
 175   the door.

- 172   Burglar. ba-ug-al-r  
 173   *J. Will we read it together?*  
 174   *S. Yea*

*Jackie and Stephen read together:*

It wasn't a burglar. 'Bear!' said Sophie. 'Naughty!' So today a serious man in a serious hat came to look at our bear. He wrote something in a big black book. 'Will you have to take him away?' I said. 'We nearly always do,' said the man. He pointed his pen at my bear. 'But,' he said, 'this bear is an Exception.' 'This bear,' he went on, 'has fallen quite unexpectedly into a storybook. And it is not up to me to say what should happen next.' 'So can we keep him?' I said. 'Ask them,' he said. And he pointed straight out of the picture at YOU. And you thought for a moment. You looked at the man. You looked at the bear. You looked at Sophie. You looked at me. And then you said . . . 'YES YOU CAN!' So we did.

### Plan of the remainder of the book

The rest of the book divides into four parts, each part offering a critical account of a particular perspective on reading. Part One offers a psycho-

linguistic perspective on reading. Part Two takes a cognitive-psychological stance. Part Three considers reading from a socio-cultural perspective. Part Four views reading through a socio-political lens. Each part begins with two scholars' interpretation of Stephen as a reader, their suggestions for how he might be advanced as a reader, and the theory underpinning their practical suggestions. I decided to include the full transcript of each interview for two reasons. First, to give the fullest account offered by these distinguished literacy educators. Second, to allow the reader access to the context in which they made particular comments, particularly those comments that were selected for elaboration and discussion in the subsequent parts of the book. Depending on the slight variations of the interview context, these transcripts have combinations of subheadings and questions. A detailed discussion is then offered of each major perspective.

Part Two is rather longer than any of the other parts for the practical reason that this perspective has had a long history and has generated considerably more research on reading and, perhaps more importantly, has informed the current policy context in England more than any other reading perspective. Each part also considers official literacy curriculum in England, namely the National Literacy Strategy, in the light of that particular perspective.

The Conclusion draws together the main themes of the book and highlights some major implications for practice and for policy.